oh! BROTHER

Date: Sun, 2 Mar 1997 13:41:07 -0500 (EST)
From: John Stoltenberg
To: profem-l@postbox.anu.edu.au
Subject: Re: [PROFEM] MALE SUPREMACY AND THE MEN'S PRO-FEMINIST MOVEMENT
Sender: owner-profem-l@coombs.anu.edu.au

In a message dated 97-03-02 09:32:08 EST, Geov Parrish writes:

>The following year, issues of internal racism came to the fore with
>NOMAS's decision to hold the 1991 M&M Conference in Tucson, Arizona
>- a state being boycotted for conventions and conferences by a number of
>national civil rights groups because it rescinded state recognition of a holiday
>honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

>The boycott, and the incompatibility of NOMAS claiming to combat racism
>while refusing to respect a boycott called by a majority of the national groups
>whose primary work was on racial issues, was brought to the attention of NOMAS's
>leadership by several people - most notably John Stoltenberg, a well-known pro-feminist
>writer; Vernon McClean, Chair of the Committee to Eliminate Racism and one of the
>only African- American activists in NOMAS; and Council member Rus Ervin Funk.
>Funk and Stoltenberg were vilified for their efforts.

This did indeed happen.

When I read in the New York Times in late 1990 that the National Football League had vowed to relocate the Super Bowl in order to honor the Arizona tourism boycott--called by Jesse Jackson and national civil rights groups because of that state legislature's recalcitrance in joining a national holiday to memorialize Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.--I wrote a note to several friends on the council inquiring why, if the NFL could get this, could not NOMAS as well? It was at this time that I also began to omit all references to NOMAS from a conference I was organizing and from my own biographical materials. (I asked my publisher to change the bio on new printings of Refusing to Be a Man, for instance.) I could not stand the thought that my name might be seen to endorse what to me was an unconscionable decision by NOMAS leadership, and I was privately aghast thereafter when the council co-chairs began a campaign not only to dig in to defend their decision (to hold the 1991 M&M conference in Arizona) but to discredit me personally by name for my oppositional views. (I have in my files a copy of a broadside that Bob Brannon circulated at the Arizona conference doing such.)

I subsequently resigned my position as a task group chair.

Some time thereafter, still appalled at the lack of moral leadership I'd seen demonstrated by the

NOMAS council (The heady days when Jack Straton and Jon Cohen, then cochairs, had proposed a brilliant model for a "national campaign to end male supremacy" were long gone), I sent a formal memo to the NOMAS council pointing out the blatant discrepancy between a decision made by a mostly white organization to break the Arizona boycott whereas, with gay men who are white well represented in the organization, they would not think of breaking the tourism boycott against Colorado (an action that had been called by lesbian and gay civil rights groups to protest that state's recently passed homophobic legislation). I also drafted and submitted a formal resolution for the council that would acknowledge, for the record, that its decision to hold the M&M conference in Arizona had been a grave mistake. I am under the impression that that resolution I drafted (or some version of it) was passed, although no one in council leadership ever communicated this information to me, so I cannot be certain. I am also under the impression that NOMAS council subsequently recruited several men of color and made antiracism one of the organization's major principles.

I meanwhile let my membership expire.

I invested a considerable chunk of my life helping to build a national antisexist organization committed to ending men's violence, going back at least as far as 1978. But with hindsight, in my opinion, a vacuum of moral leadership began imploding NOMAS about seven years ago--just after the 1990 Atlanta M&M conference (when the council voted against Straton and Cohen's visionary proposal and they resigned as cochairs). Shortly after the Arizona-boycott-busting incident were the events Geov Parrish describes concerning Changing Men's pro-pedophilic publications. I did not publicly weigh in with my views on this shameful development. NOMAS literally no longer spoke for me. And I should have been thought a fool to speak for NOMAS.

John Stoltenberg

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Exposing the phallacies of the pro-feminist men's movement

Status quo